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ABSTRACT

This paper contains a description and evaluation of a project designed to assist teachers, aides, and parents in the preparation of preelementary children for structured elementary school reading programs. Activities involving 22 teachers and aides and 71 parents from seven schools or child care sites are described. A section on achievement data notes that little difference was found between experimental and control group subjects, while the section on attainment of objectives indicates that there was high parental involvement in learning activities with their children as a result of training workshops. (MKM)

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READING IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
PRE-ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

ADMINISTRATOR:	Norman Newberg
HEADQUARTERS:	Room 323, 21st and Parkway
TELEPHONE:	299-7776
PBRS CODE:	92-01-941
OPERATING YEARS:	1977-1979
GRADES SERVED:	Pre-elementary
NO. OF PUPILS:	400
NO. OF SITES:	6
NO. OF EMPLOYEES:	1
CURRENT BUDGET:	25,000
SERVICE PROVIDED:	This project provides training for parents, teachers and aides of pre-school-age children in the areas of communication skills.
EVALUATION TEAM:	Judith Suzanne Green*, William E. Loue, III

OBSERVED ACTIVITIES

The Reading Improvement Project, Pre-elementary component (funded under Title VII, Educational Amendments Act) was considered fully implemented after its intended mode of opeartion was revised at mid-year in order to accommodate the greatest number of parents.

This was the project's second year of operation. Attendance records forwarded by project staff indicated that a total of 22 teachers and aides from six schools and 71 parents from seven schools or child-care sites participated in the project.

This program was designed to assist teachers, aides, and parents in the preparation of pre-elementary children for the structured elementary school reading program. Workshop sessions (1) provided techniques for both the home and classroom setting to enrich children's language, thinking and reading readiness skills and (2) established a cooperative atmosphere for the sharing of these techniques among parents, teachers, and aides.

A training design was created to determine the most effective and efficient way to deliver services to parents. The training design included sessions for parents only, for parents, teachers and aides, and a summer program for parents and their children.

Teachers and Aides

A total of 22 teachers and aides from six schools or child-care sites participated in the project. Twelve two-hour workshops were presented by the Affective

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Education staff to the teachers, aides and parents of five schools. In order to accommodate working parents, the teachers and parents from one school received six sessions in the evenings. Participants received training on topics including (1) creative play, (2) reading readiness skills (visual, auditory, motor, sensory, concentration), (3) child development approaches/theories, (4) social skills, and (5) connecting reading with daily living.

The varied activities presented at workshops focused on a specific topic and age-appropriate expectations for the children. Discussions during these sessions allowed activities of past weeks to be shared. Positive, open communication seemed to exist between project staff and participants.

Teachers and aides completed the Teacher-Child Activity Logs, which indicated the number and types of activities attempted with their students.

One project staff member visited classrooms to clarify techniques previously presented. Teachers and aides received a total of 74 visits as logged by the staff member. The evaluation team observed teachers and aides presenting lessons suggested during workshops as well as related follow-up activities (worksheets, displays).

Parents

Parents (together with teachers and aides) from four schools received 11 two hour workshop sessions. One site, in order to accommodate working parents, scheduled six sessions with teachers and aides in the evenings. In order to defray the burden of babysitting and transportation costs, a regularly attending parent was given a $5.00 stipend per session.

In addition to the joint workshop sessions previously described, the parents received additional services. These included parents-only sessions and home demonstrations. The four parents-only sessions conducted by parent trainers were designed to include topics on communication skills, discipline and punishment, social skills, and bridging the gap between home and school.

It should be noted that parent trainers who were responsible for scheduling and conducting workshops for parents encountered several difficulties. The major reported problems were the following: (1) contacting parents to arrange for mutually convenient workshop times became a difficult task because all parents did not have telephones in their homes; (2) some of the parent trainers worked full-time during the day and were only available for workshops during the evenings. Evening workshops, however, were not always convenient for parents; (3) parent trainers were reimbursed for their services from Title I funds. The Title I fiscal year ended on June 30 and the Title VII fiscal year, August 31. Thus funds for parent trainers were not avialable during the time when the scheduling of some workshops could have been arranged.

Home demonstrations were scheduled to begin after the second "parents-only" session and included both parent and child. The content of these sessions was directly related to workshop sessions emphasizing the parent as a teacher. One of the five trainers worked with parents and children and provided three sessions stressing social skills.

The evaluation team accompanied one of the parent trainers into two homes for home demonstrations. Parent-child interactions during these observed sessions focused on reading a book to the child. The parent trainer modeled age-appropriate questionning techniques for the parent. At the conclusion of the session, a form was completed by the parent indicating techniques to be worked on during the week. Techniques included such items as (1) "listening more to my child" and (2) "encouraging my child to speak".

In order to service more parents some of the Home Demonstrations were conducted in lieu of the parents-only sessions (because this was the only contact with some parents.) While there was an absence of group sharing by this segment of the parents, one of the trainers reported positive reactions to the materials presented. It should also be noted that many of these Home Demonstrations were conducted in an attempt to reach those parents who had not attended many sessions. This was a modification of the original plan which specified home demonstrations only for parents with regular attendance.

Summer Parent-Child

In addition to the workshops conducted during the regular school term, three summer training sessions were conducted focusing on Art and the Development of the Child and Mathematics and the Pre-School Child. The majority of parents attending these sessions were recruited from those who attended previous workshops. The sessions were planned so that parents and children were together for a portion of each session. The parents attending these sessions received a $5.00 stipend for each session in order to defray the burden of babysitting and transportation costs.

Achievment Data

An attempt was made to compare the reading readiness skills of kindergarten children whose teachers, aides, and parents were project participants with a comparison kindergarten group.

The Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT) was administered to all kindergarten students in February as part of the City-Wide Testing Program. These test results served as a pretest for the students in the five participating project classrooms. Three additional kindergarten classes from the project schools agreed to serve as comparison classes. The five project classes and the three comparison classes were administered Part 4, Aural Comprehension, of the SESAT

again in May. The project staffs elected the Aural Comprehension section as the most appropriate section of the test for measuring some of the skills empahsized in their training efforts. This test did not encompass the entire content emphasized by the project.

A total of 116 project students were administered the posttest in June. Of these, 77 (66%) were also tested in February. The high transiency rate of students in these schools is reflected in this result. The mean pretest score for project students (N=77) was 17.22; the mean posttest socre was 17.24. For the comparison students (N=52) the mean pretest score was 18.55; the mean posttest score was 17.57. A comparison of the mean pretest scores for project students and comparison students revealed a significant difference (t=1.70, df=137) favoring the comparison classes. An attempt to analyze the final data using more advanced statistical procedures was blocked because the teachers of two of the comparison classes refused to allow the evaluator to record the names of their students on the test papers, thereby preventing any matching with pretest scores. Participating kindergarten students, although not evidencing higher achievement in aural comprehension than a group of comparison students, maintained the same scores between pretest and psottest while the comparison students experienced a decline in scores. Further investigation into the achievement outcomes of project and non-project students is recommended.

Supplementary Data

Museum Trip. Thirty-eight parents, teachers, and aides visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art under the direction of a museum staff member. The emphasis of the trip was the museum for the young child and the beauty of books. Parents were encouraged to visit the museum with their children. It was reported that some parents returned to the museum with their children.

Parent Child Workbook. Staff members compiled an activity book for parents to use with their children. All participating parents received a copy. It was reported that both parents and children enjoyed using these activities.

Learning Modules Kit. It was reported that each regularly attending parent received the Learning Modules Kit which was developed by the Readers Digest for use with young children. A demonstration on the use of the kit was provided by representatives of the publisher.

ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: During the 1978-1979 school year, the Affective Education Parent Training program will offer intensive long-term training to eligible parents of pre-school children to the extent that at least 50% of enrolled parents will attend at least two-thirds of all training sessions as recorded on formal attendance sheets.

This objective was attained.

Eighteen (18) parents (64%) attended at least two-thirds of the workshop sessions. Eleven of these parents attended more than eighty percent of the sessions.

Project staff established that parents attending a minimum of four workshop sessions were considered "enrolled" in the program and were eligible to receive materials and a $5.00 stipend per session. All other attending parents received only materials (workbooks, activity sheets, books).

Attendance records forwarded by the project staff to the evaluation team indicated that 28 parents representing five schools attended a minimum of four workshop sessions.

Project staff provided 11 sessions to parents from four schools; six sessions were provided to accomodate working parents from one school.

Objective 2: During the 1978-1979 school year, each project staff participant will implement at least one-half of all assigned activities presented during the training program as verified by the Project Classroom Activity Log.

This objective was considered attained. Teacher and Aides were expected to implement at least 15 (50%) of the thirty assigned activities with their students. A total of 22 teachers and aides representing six schools reported implementing a total of 587 activities with their students. The mean number of activities implemented was 26.7.

Seventeen teachers and aides (77%) implemented an average of 31 activities with their students. This represented twice as many activities as was expected. Five teachers and aides (23%) implemented an average of 11 activities. Of these 5, three implemented a total of 14 activities; one, 11 activities; and one, three activities. It should be noted that four of the five participants were aides who sometimes had difficulty implementing activities because their classroom teachers did not provide ample time during the school day.

Activities were selected from those actually presented or suggested during workhsops or from activity handouts and encompassed motor, visual, auditory, concentration, language, and social skills.

Objective 3: During the 1978-1979 school year, each parent who maintains regular attendance at training sessions will implement with her children at least one-half of assigned activities presented during the training program as verified by the Parent-Child Activity Log.

This objective was considered attained. Parents who attended a minimum of four sessions were considered enrolled and were expected to implement at least 10 (50%) of the twenty assigned activities with their children. Seventeen of the 18 regularly attending parents implemented an average of 34 activities with their

children as recorded on the Parent-Child Activity Log. This represents more than three times the expected number of activities. Only one parent did not implement the expected 10 activities.

IMPACT

The Reading Improvement Project for pre-elementary students was considered fully implemented according to a revised intended mode of operation.

This was the project's second year of operation. Teachers, aides and parents received training in techniques to enrich children's language, thinking, and reading readiness skills. Sessions included parents only, parents, teachers and aides and summer parent-child sessions. The joint parent, teacher and aide sessions attempted to establish a cooperative atmosphere for the sharing of these techniques. These sessions were reported to have the best attendance and participants. A total of 71 parents from seven schools and 22 teachers and aides from six schools were involved in the training.

The project's two objectives dealing with activities to be practiced with children by teachers and aides and parents were considered attained. A majority of the participants reported being involved in two to three times the expected number of activities. Parents' attendance exceeded the expected criterion of 50%. Discussions with both parents and teachers revealed extensive enthusiasm for the project.

It should be noted that participating kindergarten students, although not achieving higher posttest scores on the Aural Comprehension section of the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, maintained the same scores between pretest and posttest (a 4 month period) while non-participating students experienced a decline in scores.